

Shatter [part one]

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### part one

SEPTEMBER, 1998

"Who's there?" Willow called out, backing away from the dark mouth of the alley; she kept moving until her back touched the cold metal of the streetlight.

"Relax," a male voice soothed. "I'm not gonna bite." Willow rolled her eyes, silently moving her hand up to the small of her back and the stake Giles had forced her to hide there. "You don't believe me?" the man asked, and she shook her head. She heard him sigh, and suddenly her knees went weak as he stepped out of the alley. His dark eyes held intense amusement as he witnessed her reaction. Willow felt rage boil up inside of her as she straightened her posture and glared at him.

"Who are you?"

"A friend," he replied, smiling slightly.

"Sorry, got enough friends," she shrugged, turning away from him.

"How long's the Master been out?" he asked suddenly. Her head whipped around to meet his eyes.

"You know about the Master?" A brief flash of fear danced in her eyes, but was quickly replaced by the familiar icy look.

"You've lost friends, haven't you?" the man asked, avoiding her question. "A lover, perhaps? A mentor?"

"Who the hell are you?" Willow hissed. The man opened his mouth, but before he could reply, he suddenly found himself lying on his back with a combat boot pressed against his throat. "Nice shot, Xander," Willow greeted.

"Who he?" Xander asked, gesturing to the man on the ground beneath him. The redhead shrugged.

"He says he's a friend," she replied.

"Human?"

"He didn't try to bite."

"You human?" Xander asked the man; the stranger didn't reply. Well, rather, he couldn't reply seeing how Xander's boot was still pressing against his throat. "You think G-man would care if we brought a stray home?"

"He knows about vampires," she shrugged; Xander raised an eyebrow and removed his foot from the man's throat. The stranger coughed loudly, rubbing his throat.

"What the hell was that for?" he asked.

"Looked like you were attacking my Will," Xander replied, slinging an arm over Willow's shoulders. "I didn't like that. So, you of the fanged species?"

"I don't bite," the man replied.

"Good enough for me. How 'bout you?" Xander asked, looking over at Willow.

"If he tries anything, we can take him."

"Agreed." With that the two friends led the stranger through the streets of Sunnydale; the two teens kept watchful eyes on the sides of the street, looking out for any possible dangers. They neared the high school in silence with Willow stealing glances at the man neither he nor Xander were looking.

"Why are we going to the high school?" the man asked as they mounted the steps and headed around to the back of the building.

"Headquarters," Xander replied quickly, pulling a key out of his back pocket and inserting it into the first door they came to. The teen pushed the fire door open and ushered the other two inside the vault.

"What's this place?"

"The vault. Where the old books go to die," Willow replied, pulling open the other door that was situated across from the first. Soft light from the library stacks slid in the door as the girl and her

friend walked out. The man stood there in silence, seeming to contemplate his next move. "You coming?" Willow asked, popping her head back in the door; he sighed and followed her out.

"Hey, G-man! We come bearing gifts!" Xander shouted as they stepped into the center of the library.

"Xander, how many times have I asked you not to call me that?" Giles replied, not looking up from his book.

"Five times, and that's just today," the boy replied, pulling stakes, crosses, and vials of holy water out of the pockets of his cargo pants and setting them down on the table. Giles looked up to glare at the teen, but his attention was drawn to the dark haired stranger.

"Hello," Giles greeted cautiously.

"Hey," the man nodded, placing his hands in the pockets of his jacket.

"And you are?" Giles prodded, his hand drifting down to the crossbow he stored under the table.

"Angel," he replied; Giles raised an eyebrow. Angel sighed. "I've come to help you against the Master."

"And how can you do that?" Giles asked, his hand gripping the crossbow tighter. Angel sighed and rolled his eyes up to the ceiling. When he returned his face to the humans of the room, the demon was present in all its glory. "Gods," Giles hissed, bringing the crossbow up swiftly and aiming it at the vampire's heart.

"I thought you didn't bite," Xander snarled, slipping into a fighting stance. Only Willow seemed to be unperturbed.

"I don't," Angel replied. He opened his mouth to continue, but he was silenced by blinding pain as something impacted with the base of his skull. He slumped forward as he slipped into unconsciousness, and Willow grinned triumphantly at the two men.

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